

Solar Eclipse Due Here July 20; Doctors Warn Of Possible Eye Damage

The fascinating sight of a solar eclipse can mean permanent eye damage for those unsuspecting children and adults who stare at the darkened sun through sunglasses, smoked glass, or exposed photographic film during North America's eclipse on July 20.

that there is no safe method of looking directly into the eclipse without risking incurable burns of the retina from infra-red rays of the sun. The voluntary health agency suggests other safer means of observing the phenomenon.

The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness warns

WIDESPREAD reports of damaged vision in Western

states, especially among school children, after a partial eclipse of the sun three years ago prompted the NSPB warning. Utah alone counted 31 definite cases of eye burns after the September, 1960, eclipse; all but five victims were youngsters. An estimated 75 children suffered retinal burns in the

state of Washington during the same eclipse.

A solar eclipse results when the moon, passing between the earth and the sun, hides all or part of the sun from our view. The July 20 eclipse will bring total darkness along a path through Alaska, Canada and Maine, and a partial covering of the sun in the continental

United States, the Caribbean area, most of Mexico and Central America, and the remaining parts of Alaska, Canada, and Maine.

VISION damage from the sun is caused when the eye focuses the infra-red rays of the sun on the retina, explained John W. Ferree, M. D.,

executive director of the National Society. An irreparable burn results, very similar to the way a magnifying glass can be used to burn a hole in a piece of paper with the sun's rays.

"Normally, the sun is much too bright for a person to view comfortably," Dr. Ferree pointed out. "But during an

eclipse enough light is blocked out to permit easy observation. This is when the rays do their damage, unnoticed, because the retina is not sensitive to pain."

WHEN THE SUN is serious enough to scar that small portion of the retina where the rays were focused, no treatment can cure it. The scar

causes a defect of vision which may show up as a blank spot on whatever the eye is looking at. Very often the damage strikes only one eye because people normally close the other eye when watching an eclipse.

Dr. Ferree advised that the July 20th eclipse be observed (Continued on Page 19)

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